depended on the capable efforts of the new Belorussian workers who were sent into what had been Gomel' Guberniya. They were able to cope with the task.

Minority Problems

The equality on the Belorussian territory of the four official languages, Belorussian, Russian, Polish, and Jewish, was recognized by a govermental decree. In practice only Belorussian was at all widely used, and Russian was employed in dealing with institutions of the U. S. S. R. Jewish and Polish were spoken in the national schools, kindergartens, theaters, libraries, and so on. The severity with which equality of the four languages was enforced sometimes became absurd. In the town of Rechitsa in 1928, at a municipal teachers conference, one participant who was the principal of a Jewish school made her observations in a speech in Jewish. Of course an interpreter had to be used. A Belorussian schoolteacher, Mokhnach, who had been renowned in the past for his liberal convictions and activities, but who unfortunately was versed in the unexpected twists and turns of Soviet policy, proposed quite correctly that all speakers use "Russian, as it is the most widely understood." For this proposal, which would appear to have been quite innocent, Mokhnach was accused of Great Russian chauvinism, immediately fired from his job, excluded from the trade union, and also deprived of a pension after his forty-five years of service in the school system. This shows just how unsuccessfully the Soviets could choose a subject upon whom to demonstrate how severely and unrelentingly anyone would be punished who transgressed against the Stalinist policy towards the minorities.

Special court chambers where litigation was conducted in Jewish were opened in the large cities to serve the Jewish population. In small towns and in some larger ones where Jews lived in compact groups, local and village soviets were formed -- providing service for the population in its native language. /14/

The national work concerning the so-called Polish population of Belorussia was a rather special case. In Minsk and in other cities there were several responsible workers /in the nationalist movement/ who were Poles by nationality. They were almost all Communists and native-born Poles, for the most part deriving from the Polish Socialist Party (P. P. S.). Moreover, twenty-five percent of the native